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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ADDIS ABABA 001134

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DEPARTMENT FOR AF AND AF/E , AND INR/AA
LONDON, PARIS, ROME FOR AFRICA WATCHER
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SUBJECT: SOMALIA: SPOKESMAN FOR PRESIDENT YUSUF SAYS THE
PRIME MINISTER HAS FAILED

Classified By: Ambassador Donald Yamamoto. Reason: 1.4(B) and (D).

11. (C) SUMMARY. Mr. Hussein Mohammed, Transitional Federal Government (TFG) Spokesman for the Office of the President, told Emboffs on April 18 that TFG Prime Minister Nur Adde had failed as Prime Minister and insisted that the TFG must never compromise with the al-Shabaab insurgents. Hussein assessed that al-Shabaab was gaining ground in Somalia and increasing its influence. He also criticized the Ethiopian military for failing to be aggressive enough against the insurgents. Lastly, he insisted the TFG had the full support of the Somali people, but that they dared not express their support for fear of being killed by the insurgents. END SUMMARY.

"THE PRIME MINISTER HAS FAILED"

12. (C) Hussein, highly critical of Prime Minister Nur Adde's efforts to reconcile with the Somali opposition, declared the PM a failure. He said that the Prime Minister's actions did not live up to President Yusuf's expectations. He said the President expected Nur Adde to act as a soldier to fight al-Shabaab, but that instead the PM was "too soft" and only wanted to talk. When queried about the future of the PM, Hussein responded, "there will be a change." However, he declined to discuss in any detail how Prime Minister Nur Adde might be removed or when, and noted that the President would have to discuss the issue with other members of the government. Despite the differences between the President and Prime Minister, he said they talked to each other face-to-face on a daily basis.

13. (C) In a semi-joking tone, Hussein commented that within the TFG, the Prime Minister's office was referred to as the "al-Shabaab office." He went on say that even al-Shabaab considers the PM to be "a nice man." When queried whether the President missed former Prime Minister Gedi, Hussein smiled and responded, "sometimes," because at least Gedi was ideologically opposed to reconciliation with the extremists.

"THE TFG MUST NOT TALK TO AL-SHABAAB"

14. (C) Turning to a more serious tone, Hussein said

emphatically that the TFG must never talk to al-Shabaab because they are "animals" who must be destroyed. Hussein then pointed out on his body where he had been shot five times last year, including through his face, and said that he still carried a bullet in his chest. Hussein said he was a high profile target in Mogadishu and that insurgents called him on the phone regularly either threatening to kill him or trying to convince him to ally with al-Shabaab. To make his point, he said that about two months ago he sent a young woman to the Bakara Market to buy furniture for him because he would be killed if he entered the area. In the market, the extremists recognized the woman as Hussein's associate and took her captive. The insurgents then called Hussein on the phone and decapitated the woman so that Hussein could hear her scream.

AL-SHABAAB GAINING GROUND

15. (C) Hussein said that al-Shabaab was gaining ground in Somalia and he criticized the Ethiopian troops for failing to take aggressive action against them. He said the insurgents controlled the area from Afgoye to Kismayo and Ras Kamboni in lower Juba and had training camps in Galgadud in central Somalia. In recent months, the insurgents have been increasing their control in Bay, Bakool, and Hiraan regions and capturing towns at will. Hussein said that in April the insurgents had cut the road in Buur Hakaba severing overland traffic between Mogadishu and Baidoa, the two seats of the TFG.

16. (C) The Ethiopian troops were concentrated in Mogadishu,

ADDIS ABAB 00001134 002 OF 002

Afgoye, Baidoa, and other dangerous areas, he said, but noted that they were not as active as they should be. He claimed that the Ethiopian military could "clean out" Mogadishu in three weeks if they wanted to and he accused Colonel Gebre--an Ethiopian officer in Mogadishu--of being on al-Shabaab's payroll. He did admit that the TFG would not exist without Ethiopian military support. Although critical of Ethiopia, he insisted the Ethiopian military would not withdraw from Somalia because their own security interests demanded they stay.

PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR THE TFG?

17. (C) When queried whether the TFG had the popular support of the Somali people, Hussein responded that "everyone" supports the TFG. However, he said that no one can display their support in public or they will be killed by the insurgents. He lamented that the TFG did not have an effective media strategy and needed more capability to get their message to the Somali people.

COMMENT

18. (C) Hussein, as President Yusuf's propaganda man, clearly stayed on message consistent with Yusuf's well known criticisms of Prime Minister Nur Adde. Nevertheless, his comments may be useful in demonstrating the width of the chasm between President and Prime Minister. END COMMENT.
YAMAMOTO